

**THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
CLEVELAND 6. OHIO**

TELEPHONE: GARFIELD 1-7340

FOR RELEASE

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17TH CENTURY FRENCH PAINTING ACQUIRED BY THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

The Cleveland Museum of Art has just acquired a notable painting of CHARLES II, KING OF ENGLAND. The portrait was executed in 1653 by the 17th century Court Painter Philippe de Champaigne.

Champaigne was born in Brussels in 1602 but lived most of his life in Paris where he worked under French masters. He was employed by the Court Painter of Louis XIII to paint with Nicholas Poussin in the Palace of Luxembourg. Marie de Medici became his patroness and was largely responsible for his success. He carried out commissions for her and later entered the service of King Louis XIII as Court Painter. Champaigne was fortunate also in securing the patronage of Cardinal Richelieu the great connoisseur and patron of the arts. Richelieu was the subject of Champaigne's two most famous portraits. These hang in the Louvre and National Gallery, London. The decoration of the Chateau de Vincennes was his last important work. He executed it as Court Painter under Louis XIV. Champaigne lived in Paris until his death in 1674.

While Champaigne received countless commissions for religious paintings in churches and municipal buildings he particularly excelled in portraiture and soon surpassed his French rivals. He painted Louis XIII and Louis XIV and their Queens Anne and Maria Theresa and other personages of the Court and Church. Another genre in which Champaigne worked was landscape which he used in his portraits.

In the Museum's portrait CHARLES' vital masculine figure is shown in shimmering dress armor of great elegance. The background in the lower left corner is a magnificent seascape with a flotilla of ships in the distance. It was done during the critical year of 1653 at St. Germain where the future king of England was living in exile and deep in a struggle to persuade France to join the British in their fight against Cromwell. He was not successful. The king of France signed a

treaty with England and Charles was forced to flee to Holland where he remained until Cromwell's death in 1658. In 1660 he was recalled to England and crowned King.

Charles II was tall and of dark countenance. He had sensual features and a strong character. Champaigne has deftly captured these characteristics in the Museum's portrait. The King was a man of courage, an able sovereign and a man vitally interested in naval affairs. In the Cleveland portrait Charles stands in a commanding pose, a man of seemingly keen intelligence and perception. It is not merely a portrait of ceremony but a powerful expression of Champaigne's feeling for a young man of ability and promise.

This canvas hung for many years in the Royal Palace of St. Germain. It was owned by Jules Feral of St. Germain and later became a part of the Stanley Mortimer Collection in New York. It was shown in the exhibition FRENCH PAINTING, 1100 - 1900 at the Carnegie Institute in 1951. In 1952 it was shown at the Philippe de Champaigne exhibition at the Orangerie des Tuilleries which later travelled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is fortunate in acquiring this important work of French 17th century art. It is now on exhibition at the Museum in Gallery 6. *It was purchased for the Elisabeth Severance Prentiss Collection.*

For further information and photographs write or telephone Margaret R. Parkin
Garfield 1-7340

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